SFChronicle JAN 1 0 1976

Salinas Lettuce Grower Denies 'Backing' Political Burglar

SFChronicle

A widely-known Salinas lettuce grower denied yesterday "backing" political burglar Jerry Ducote in a futile attempt to smear farm labor leader Cesar Chavez in the late 1960s.

"I have never backed Mr. Ducote on anything," insisted Stephen D'Arrigo Jr., secretary-treasurer of D'Arrigo Brothers farm in Salinas, who was testifying at Ducote's preliminary hearing in San Jose Municipal Court.

But D'arrigo, a nervous, often vague and forgetful witness, changed his testimony under cross-examination and admitted embarking on what he called "ventures" with the confessed political burglar.

Ducote, 46, charged with 22 felonies involving political espionage, has claimed that D'arrigo and two other California growers hired him in 1966-67 to committ 17 burglaries of left-wing organizations in an attempt to link Chavez to a Communist faction.

D'arrigo would only admit that he and Ducote flew to Washington "It might have been in 1968, I can't recall exactly." to visit former Republican congressman Charles S. Gubser of Gilroy.

"Ducote thought it would be a good idea to see some influential people in Washington so he could explain the real facts of California

STEPHEN D'ARRIGO
He admitted 'ventures'

agriculture," D'arrigo testified.

He also confirmed that the two met with Gubser and a man supposed to be a CIA agent.

According to Ducote, the CIA agent was given stolen documents taken in three Bay Area burglaries, including burglary of Ramparts Magazine.

D'arrigo also said that in 1969 he and Ducote founded a publishing firm named after St. Dismas, the "so-called good thief" from the Bible story of the crucifixion of Christ.

That firm, D'arrigo said, published one book "about Saul Alinsky." The book, written by a San Jose Jesuit priest was based on documents Ducote now admits stealing from the Chicago office of the political activist, who died in 1972.

Until further cross-examination, D'arrigo admitted that he had sent Ducote to collect $2000 cash each from Delano grape grower Jack Pandol and Bob Martin, Cel-A-Pak, a Salinas produce shipper.

D'arrigo dodn't disclose what the money was for or why Ducote collected it for him.

In earlier testimony, Andy Gulermovich, a California Insurance Commission agent, admitted accompanyino Ducote on four "midnight sojourns" which involved burglaries at the Russian American Institute, the Student Non-Violent Coordination Committee, both in San Francisco, the Palo Alto Peace Center and the United Farm Workers Headquarters in Delano.

Gulermovich testified that he, Ducote and Henry Scherling took "documents by illegal means" in the belief the files were for a "government agency."

Ducote, held in jail since his arrest December 22, won one victory yesterday. His $100,000 bail was reduced to $20,000. The hearing will resume Monday.

SFChronicle DEC 26 1975

Ducote's Confessions

THE AMAZING CONFESSIONS of Jerome Ducote, who says he led a series of illegal, Watergate-style political burglaries of union and peace group offices in California during the mid-1960s are shocking and depressing, to say the least.

According to Ducote, a former Santa Clara sheriff's deputy and former officer of the Young Republicans and the John Birch Society, he carried out 17 forays into the offices of the United Farm Workers and various left-oriented groups and individuals between 1964 and 1968 in an effort to discredit the union and the anti-war movement.

WORST OF ALL, Ducote claims that many of these illegal acts were requested by state and local agricultural officials and that police in Delano decided to ignore the burglary of UFW headquarters there after Ducote told them he was only trying to get pro-Communist evidence against union leader Cesar Chavez.

Some of the people who have been accused of sending Ducote on his seamy rounds have denied his accusations, and countercharged that he is "a liar," but Santa Clara law enforcement officials have confirmed that the 17 claimed break-ins did take place.

THE POLITICAL BURGLARIES deserve the closest scrutiny from law enforcement officials and those involved in the illegal, anti-democratic acts deserve the fullest punishment the law allows.